

It Makes Some Difference Whether You're Buying a Baby's Toy or Hit a Streak of Bad Luck Playing Poker

# The One Hundred Dollar

BY  
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THE new one-hundred-dollar bill, clean and green, slid over the glass of the teller's counter to a fat hand, dingy on the knuckles, but brightened by a flawed diamond. This interesting hand was part of one of those men who seem to have too much fattened muscle for their clothes; his shoulders distended his overcoat; his calves strained the sprightly checked cloth of his trousers; his short neck bulged above the glossy collar. His small eyes twinkled surreptitiously between those upper and nether puffs of flesh that mark the too faithful practitioner of unhalloved gayeties.

Obviously, the man's small head after a sportive pitch in it, for the twinkling between his eyes hinted of liquor in the offing and lively women impressed by a show of masterly riches. Here, in brief, was a man who meant to make a night of it. He was happy, and went out of the bank believing that money is made for joy.

The splendid one-hundred-dollar bill was taken from him untimely, before nightfall that very evening. At the corner of two busy streets he parted with it to the law, though only after a solid-blinded threatening of the part of the lawyer. This latter walked away thoughtfully, with the one-hundred-dollar bill in his pocket. Collinson was the lawyer's name, and in years he was only twenty-eight, but already of slightly harassed appearance. His hair, ready-made clothes, his twice-soled shoes and his hair, too long for a neat and businesslike aspect, were symptoms of necessary economy; but he did not wear the eager look of a man who saves to "get on for himself." Collinson's look was that of an employed man who only deepens his rut with his pining of it.

An employed man he was, indeed; a lawyer without much hope of ever seeing his name on the door or on the letters of the firm that employed him and his most important work was the collection of small debts. This one-hundred-dollar bill now in his pocket was such a collection, small to the client, though of a noble size to himself and the long-purged debtor from whom he had just collected it.

The banks were closed, so was the office, for Collinson was on his way home when he had been summoned to the debtor; there was nothing to do but to keep the bill overnight. This was no hardship, however, as he had a faint pleasure in the unfamiliar experience of walking home with such a thing in his pocket; and he felt a little important by proxy when he thought of it.

As Collinson walked on northward, he passed a cluster of shops where the light was bright, and at one of these oases of illumination he lingered a moment, with a thought to buy a toy in the window of a three-year-old little girl. The toy was a gayly colored acrobatic monkey that willingly climbed up and down a string, and he knew that the "baby" would scream with delight at the sight of it. He had \$12 of his own in his pocket, and he decided he could not afford it. So he sighed and went on.

WHEN he reached home, the baby was crying, and his wife, pretty and a little rowdy, was, as usual, irritated by cooking, bored by the baby and puzzled by the daily life of a happy and luxurious home, and during the malnourished dinner she had prepared she mentioned many such women by name, laying particular stress upon the achievements of their husbands. Mrs. Theodore Thompson's husband had bought a perfectly beautiful little sedan automobile. Mrs. Will Gregory had merely mentioned that her old Hudson seal coat was coming in a little and her husband had instantly said: "What'll a new one come to, girlie? Four or five hundred? Run and get it." Why were other women's husbands like that—and why, oh why, was hers like that?

"My goodness!" he said. "You talk as if I had sedans and sealskin coats on me! Well, I haven't; that's all! Then go out and get 'em!" she said fiercely. "Go out and get 'em!"

"What with?" he inquired. "I have \$12 in my pocket and a balance of \$17 at the bank; that's twenty-nine. I get twenty-five from the office day after tomorrow—Saturday; that makes fifty-four; but we have to pay forty-five for rent on Monday; so that'll leave us \$9. Shall I buy you a sedan and a sealskin coat on Tuesday out of the nine?"

Mrs. Collinson began to weep a little. "The old, old story!" she said. "Six long years it's been going on now. I ask you how much you've got, and you say, 'nine dollars' and 'seven dollars' or 'four dollars,' and once it was 'sixty-five cents.' Sixty-five cents; that's what we had to live on! Sixty-five cents! Why can't you do what decent men do?"

"What's that your wives something to live for? What do you give me, I'd like to know! Look at the clothes I wear, please!"

"Well, it's your own fault," he muttered. "What did you say? Did you say it's my fault I wear clothes any woman I know wouldn't be seen in?"

"If you hadn't made me get that platinum ring—"

"Look at it!" he cried. "Look at it! It's platinum, yes, but look at the stone in it, about the size of a pinhead. A hundred and sixteen dollars is what this magnificent ring cost you, and how long I'd have to beg before I got even that little out of you? And it's the only thing I ever did get out of you!"

"Oh, Lordy," he moaned. "I wish you'd seen Charlie Loomis looking at this ring today," she said, with a desolute laugh. "I saw him keep glancing at it and I wish you'd see Charlie's expression!"

Collinson stared at her gravely; then he put down his fork and said: "So you saw Charlie Loomis today, where?"

"Oh, my," she sighed. "Have we got to go over all that again?"

"No, I didn't," she said. "I was talking about the time when you made such a fuss. I didn't go anywhere with him today."

"I wouldn't have stood for it," she said. "Oh, you wouldn't?" she cried, and added a shrill laugh as further comment. "You wouldn't have stood for it?"

"Never mind," he returned doggedly. "We went over all that last time, and you understand me. I'll have no more foolishness about Charlie Loomis."

"How nice of you! He's a friend of yours, you go with him yourself, but your wife mustn't even look at him, just because he happens to be the one man that amuses her a little. That's fine!"

"Never mind," Collinson said again. "You say you saw him today. I want to know where."

"Suppose I like a note to tell you. I want to know where you saw Charlie Loomis."

"She tossed her curls again, and laughed. 'Isn't it funny?' she said. 'Just because I like a man, he's the one person I can't have anything to do with! Just because he's kind and jolly and amusing and I like his jokes and his thoughtfulness toward a woman, when he's with her, I'm not to be allowed to see him at all! But my husband—oh that's entirely different! He can go out with Charlie whenever he likes and have a good time, while I stay home and wash dishes. Oh, it's a lovely life!'"

"Where did you see him today?" she looked at him plaintively and allowed tears to shine along her lower eyelids. "Why do you treat me like this?" she asked in a feeble voice. "Why can't I have a man friend if I want to? I do like Charlie. I do like him—"

"Yes! That's what I noticed!" "Well, but what's the good of always insulting me about him? He has time on his hands of afternoons, and so have I. Our janitor's wife is crazy about the baby and just adores to have me leave her in their flat. Why shouldn't I go to a married woman's picture show sometimes with Charlie?"

"I want to know where you saw him today!" Mrs. Collinson jumped up. "Oh, hush up!" she cried. "He came here to leave a note for you."

"Oh, said her husband. 'I beg your pardon. That's different! How sweet of you!'"

"Where's the note, please?" "She took it from her pocket and tossed it to him. 'So long as it's a note for you it's all right, of course,' she said. 'I wonder what you'd do if he'd written one to me!'"

"Never mind," said Collinson, and read the note. "Dear Collie: Dave and Smithie and Old Bill and Sammy Hoag and maybe Steinie and Sam are coming over to the shack about eight-thirty. Home brew and the old paste. You know! CHARLIE."

"You've read this, of course," Collinson said. "I have not," his wife returned, covering the prevarication with a cold dignity. "I'm not in the habit of reading the people's correspondence, thank you."

"Well, you can read it now," she said. "HER eyes swept the writing of wonder, and she made a sound of content, as if amazed to find herself so true a prophet. 'And the words weren't more than out of my mouth! You can go and have a grand party right in his flat, while your wife stays home and gets the baby to bed and washes the dishes!'"

"I'm not going," she said mockingly. "I see you miss one of Charlie's stag parties!"

"I'll miss this one." "But it was not to Mrs. Collinson's purpose that he should miss the party; and so, after carrying some dishes into the kitchenette in meditative silence, she reappeared with a changed manner. She went to her husband, gave him a shy little pat on the shoulder and laughed good-naturedly. "Of course you'll go," she said.

"You work hard the whole time, honey, and the only pleasure you ever do have, it's when you get a chance to go to one of these little penny-ante stag parties. I want you to go."

"Oh, no," said Collinson. "It's only penny-ante, but I couldn't afford to lose anything at all!"

"If you did lose, it'd only be a few cents," she said. "You'll work all the better if you go out and enjoy your self once in a while."

"Well, if you really look at it that way, I'll go," he said, smiling. "That's right, dear," she said, smiling. "Better put on a fresh collar and your other suit, hadn't you?"

"I suppose so," he assented. "When he had changed his toilet, it was time for him to go. She came in from the kitchenette and kissed him.

"There, honey," she said. "Run along and have a nice time. Then come home and tell me more about some of my little pleasures."

He held the one hundred dollar bill folded in his hand, meaning to leave it with her, but she spoke a sudden recurrence of suspicion made him forget his purpose. "Look here," he said. "I'm not making any bargain with you. You talk as if you thought I was going to let you run around to vaudeville with Charlie because you let me go to this party. Is that your idea?"

It was, indeed, precisely Mrs. Collinson's idea, and she was instantly angered enough to admit it in her retort. "Oh, aren't you mean?" she cried. "I might know better than to look for any fairness in a man like you!"

"See here!" "Oh, hush up!" she said. "Shame on you! You go to this party, with that suit put both hands upon his breast and pushed him toward the door.

"I won't go. I'll stay here." "You will, too, go!" she cried shrilly. "I don't want to look at you any more, you mean!" she said. "All right," said Collinson, violently. "I will go!"

"Yes! Get out of my sight!" And he did, taking the one hundred dollar bill with him to the penny-ante poker party.

CHARLIE LOOMIS was one of those neat, stoutheaded young men with

fat, round heads, sleek, fair hair, immaculate, pale complexions and infirm little pink mouths—in fact, he was of the type that may suggest to the student of resemblances a fastidious and clean money. You take him with transparent ears.

Charlie was particularly indulgent to pretty women and their children. One of his greatest pleasures was to tell a woman that she was "the dearest, bravest little girl in the world," and he would often bring a really magnificent toy to the child of some friend whose wife he was courting.

At thirty-three, he had already done well enough in business to take things easily, and he liked to give these little card parties, not for gain.

thing! "Smithie! Are you ever going to deal?"

"I'm going to shuffle first," he responded, suiting the action to the word, at the same time continuing his discourse. "It's a mighty interesting thing, this piece of money. You take this dollar, now. Who's it belonged to? Where's it been? What different kind of funny things has it been spent for sometimes? What funny kind of secrets do you suppose it could 'a' heard 't if it had ears? Good people have had it and bad people have had it; why a dollar could tell more about the human race—why, it could tell all about it!"

"I guess it couldn't tell all about the way you're dealing those cards,"

worth more than two dollars to me. It's worth five."

"Well, five then," his host returned. "I want that dollar!"

"So do I," said Collinson. "I'll put in five dollars if you do." "Anybody else in?" Old Bill inquired, dropping the coin on the table; and all of the others again "came in." Old Bill won again; but once more Charlie Loomis prevented him from putting the silver dollar in his pocket.

"Come on now!" Mr. Loomis exclaimed. "Anybody else but me in on this five dollars next time?"

"I am," said Collinson, swallowing with a dry throat; and he set forth all that remained to him of his twelve

don't believe he's got ten dollars more on him!"

"Oh, yes, I have." "Let's see it then." Collinson's nostrils distended a little; but he did not mind the stare in his pocket, and then tossed the one-hundred-dollar bill, rather crumpled, upon the table.

"Great heavens!" shouted Old Bill. "Call the doctor! I'm all of a swoon!" "Look at that!" cried Collinson, in a nice clean table, another said, in an awed voice. "Did you claim he didn't have ten on him, Charlie?"

"Well, it's nice to look at," Smithie observed. "But I'm with Old Bill. How long are you two going to keep this thing going? If Collie wins the luck piece, I suppose Charlie'll bet him fifteen against it, and then—"

"No, I won't," Charlie interrupted. "Ten's the limit."

"Go in to keep on betting ten against it all night?" "No," said Charlie. "I tell you what I'll do with you, Collinson; we both of us seem kind of set on this luck piece, and you're already out some on it. I'll give you a square chance at it, and at catchin' even. It's twenty minutes after 9. I'll keep on these side bets with you till 10 o'clock, but when my clock hits 10, we're through, and the one that's got it then keeps it, and no more foolin'. You want to bet, or quit now? I'm game either way."

"Go ahead and deal," said Collinson. "Whichever one of us has it at 10 o'clock, it's his, and we quit!"

BUT when the little clock on Charlie's green-painted mantelshelf struck 10, the luck piece was Charlie's and with it an overwhelming lien on the one-hundred-dollar bill. He put both in his pocket. "Remember this ain't my fault; it was yours that insisted," he said, and handed Collinson four five-dollar bills as change.

Old Bill, platonically interested, asserted that his cigar was sparkling, applied a match and casually set forth his opinion. "Well, I guess that was about as poor a way of spendin' eighty dollars as I ever saw, but it all goes to show there's truth in it all motto that anything at all can happen in any poker game! That was a mighty nice hundred-dollar bill you had on you, Collie; but it's like what Smithie said: A piece of money goes hoppin' around from one person to another—it don't care—and yours has gone and hopped to Charlie. The question is: Who's it going to hop to next?"

He paused to laugh, glanced over the cards that had been dealt, and concluded: "My guess is 't some good-lookin' woman'll probably get a pretty fair chunk of that hundred-dollar bill out of Charlie. Well, let's settle down to the ole army game."

They settled down to it, and by 12 o'clock the closing hour of these pastimes in the old shack Collinson had lost four dollars and thirty cents more. He was commiserated by his fellow gamblers as they put on their coats and overcoats. They shook their heads, laughed ruefully in sympathy and told him he ought to carry hundred-dollar bills upon his person when he went out among friends. Old Bill made what

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"Oh, no," said Old Bill. "You wouldn't let me keep it. Put it out there and play for it again." "I won't," she said. "I want my luck piece back myself." "Put it out and play for it," you made Old Bill.

"I won't do it." "Yes, you will," Collinson said, and he spoke without gentleness. "You put it out there."

"Oh, yes, will," Mr. Loomis returned mockingly. "I will for ten dollars." "Not I," said Old Bill. "Five is

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"All right, then. If you're afraid of ten, I keep it. I thought the ten'd scare you."

"Put that dollar on the table," Collinson said. "I'll put ten against it." There was a little commotion among these mild gamblers; and some one said: "You're crazy, Collie. What do you want to do that for?"

"I don't care," said Collinson. "That dollar's already cost me enough, and I'm going after it." "Well, you see, I want it, too," Charlie Loomis retorted cheerfully; and he appealed to the others. "I'm not askin' him to put up ten against it, am I?"

"Maybe not," Old Bill assented. "But how long is this thing going to keep on? It's already bailed our game all out, and if we keep on foolin' with these side bets, why, what's the use?"

"My goodness," the host exclaimed. "I'm not pushin' this thing, am I? I don't want to risk my good luck piece, do I? It's Collie that's crazy to go on ain't it?" He laughed. "He hasn't showed his money yet, though, I notice, and this ole shack is run on strictly cash principles. I

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